

TORREYA

December, 1903

CORNELIUS VAN BRUNT

BY N. L. BRITTON

(WITH PORTRAIT)

The death of Mr. Van Brunt, which took place at his residence in New York City after a painful illness of over two months, on October 1, 1903, has lost to the club one of its oldest members, and one whose contributions to botanical science were of a unique character. He was born in New York City on October 5, 1827, and was thus just about seventy-six years old. He was a direct descendant of Cornelius Rutgers Van Brunt, a Hollander, who settled on Long Island in 1653.

Mr. Van Brunt's boyhood was spent at Fishkill, New York, where he attended the village school, and he was prepared for admission to Union College, but this plan was changed and he was apprenticed to the Matteawan Machine Works. In 1853 he was interested in the organization of the Fishkill Landing Machine Works, with which he was connected until 1869, at which time he retired; resided until 1876 in Poughkeepsie, and devoted himself to studies of natural history, to which he had always been strongly attracted. During this time he was president of the Poughkeepsie Academy of Science, to the work of which he made many scientific contributions, as well as to the Vassar Brothers Institute, carrying on also studies in mechanics and electricity. He made a trip to Florida about this time, and collected birds which were presented to Vassar College.

He entered business again in 1876, and continued in it until about 1893. Microscopical investigations were in these years

[Vol. 3, No. 11, of TORREYA, comprising pages 161-176, was issued November 19, 1903.]

perhaps his favorite scientific pursuit and he became very well acquainted with the lower forms of plant life, specializing more particularly on the Diatomaceae, on which he was regarded as one of the best authorities in New York at the time the writer made his acquaintance, about 1877. He was one of the founders of the American Microscopical Society, and of the New York Microscopical Society; he was very active in the latter organization and president of it for several years, making frequent communications and exhibits at its meetings.

About the year 1886 he became interested in photography, and was one of the organizers of the Camera Club, and active in the photographic section of the American Institute. This development of his tastes was the foundation for his subsequent work in the photography of plants and flowers. He successfully conquered the difficulties of photographing flowers at close range, experimenting for many years with all kinds of lenses, plates, and developers, until he attained a dexterity in this work that has probably never been equalled. These studies were persistently and enthusiastically continued by him up to the time of his fatal illness, his work showing continuous improvement. The coloration of the lantern slides made from his negatives was undertaken by Mrs. Van Brunt about 1890, and she rapidly developed an accuracy of touch and color sense which has indeed been remarkable. The first lecture at which some of these lantern slides were used was on "Botany and Photography," delivered before this Club on April 25, 1893, followed by one on "Wild Flowers in and about New York City," delivered February 27, 1895; these sowed the seeds for the great interest in the preservation of native plants which has led up to the present concerted endeavor to protect natural woodlands and diffuse a taste for the observation of natural objects, the truest kind of nature study. During the last ten years, he has lectured on similar topics, using selections from his great accumulation of colored lantern slides, before many organizations in and about New York, and they have also been used in a few instances in other cities. Latterly he succeeded almost perfectly in enlarging photographs of minute parts of flowers, and many of these results are equal to or better than the best drawings for scientific illustration.

He was deeply interested in the establishment of the New York Botanical Garden, and many of his photographic studies were made from plants obtained there. Since the establishment of the Garden lecture courses, in the spring and autumn, the beauty of his lantern slides has been frequently admired by audiences assembled at the Museum Building, and his lectures have been among the most successful of any there delivered. He has followed the development of the Garden very closely, and since 1901 has been officially connected with it as honorary floral photographer. In addition to the organizations named above, he was a member of the New York Academy of Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Museum of Natural History, the Brooklyn Institute, the American Forestry Association, the New York Horticultural Society, the American Geographical Society, the Union League Club, and the Holland Society. He was of a genial and kindly temperament, a delightful companion, full of information on all scientific topics, and his loss is deeply felt by all who have been favored with his acquaintance. His work, and that of his faithful and devoted wife, are commemorated in the beautiful *Polemonium Van Bruntiae*, which grows in the Catskill region which he loved so well, and where he spent a portion of each year. Mr. Van Brunt leaves no descendants.

EXPLOSIVE DISCHARGE OF ANTHEROZOIDS IN HEPATICAE

BY F. CAVERS, F.L.S.

In a recent number of *Torrey* (April, 1903), there appeared an interesting note by Dr. Cyrus A. King on the explosive discharge of antherozoids in *Conocephalum conicum* (*Fegatella conica*), in which reference was made to previously published accounts of a similar phenomenon in *Asterella Californica* by Dr. Peirce and in *Conocephalum* by the present writer. At the time of writing the note which appeared in the *Annals of Botany*, January, 1903, I was not aware of any previous accounts of such discharges,